

Course Title	:	Research Methods in Policy Studies
Course Code	:	DPS702
Recommended Study Year	:	Doctor of Policy Studies Year 1
No. of Credits/Term	:	6 Credits/Term 1
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture, Seminar, and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	:	3 hours per week
Category	:	Required
Discipline	:	Sociology and Social Policy
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

This course consists of weekly lectures/workshops followed by tutorials with focus on research methods and application to various policy issues. It will consist of three parts. The first part of the course discusses major ethical issues and challenges for conducting research. The topics include the international standards of conducting research of human subjects in different policy areas, authorship, and related topics about ethics of professionalism for scholars and practitioners. The second part of the course is a nontechnical introduction to the quantitative research methods in policy studies with a focus on ideas of survey design, and concepts and tools for quantitative data analysis. Students will learn basic concepts of statistics and how to effectively present and properly interpret statistical results for policy purposes. Following the mini-lectures, tutorial sessions will be held for students to have hands-on exercises using a statistical software, SPSS, to handle real social data and complete some in-class assignments. The third part of the course will consist of introduction to basic and advanced qualitative research methods. Students will be introduced to various approaches and methods in designing and carrying out qualitative research in policy studies. Students will be introduced to topics such as discourse and content analysis. They will also be introduced to an analytical software, NVivo.

Aims

This course aims to

1. Deepen students' understanding of the general principles and practices of research integrity in general and in policy studies;

2. Equip students with knowledge of basic statistical concepts, tools and statistical analysis, and basic ideas of survey design for policy studies;
3. Equip students with skills and tools to conduct basic qualitative and textual research and analysis
4. Effectively present and properly interpret statistical results of policy research.

Learning Outcomes (LOs)

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the principles and practices of research integrity in general and in policy studies.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of basic statistical concepts, basic statistical analysis and basic ideas of survey design for policy studies.
3. Demonstrate basic knowledge in designing analysing qualitative research
4. Acquire practical experience in performing basic statistical and qualitative analysis using the appropriate software
5. Instil in students the ability to effectively present and properly interpret statistical and qualitative results.

Indicative Contents

1. General principles of responsible conduct of research
2. Introduction to social statistics and review of basic concepts
3. Descriptive statistics
4. Correlation
5. Survey design
6. The nature and approaches of qualitative research
7. Qualitative data analysis
8. Presentation and interpretation of research results
9. Tutorial sessions for hands-on exercises using research software: NVivo and SPSS

Teaching Method:

Weekly seminars and tutorials. Students will engage in discussion and in-class tasks.

Apply the general principles of responsible conduct of research to students' own research	Excellent critical awareness of subject matter and current issues. Shows original thinking and analysis.	Goes beyond description. Analyses material to develop argument.	More description than analysis in content. Needs to draw material together to develop argument.	Describes the issues but shows significant misunderstanding of basic issues.
Structure of argument	Clear structure. Presents a convincing and well developed argument.	Clear structure. Develops a sound argument.	Argument needs further development. Structure needs more clarity.	Poor structure. No clear argument. No clear linkage from point to point.
Writing and referencing	Uses references correctly. Demonstrates excellent writing skills.	Generally uses references correctly but some parts less well referenced. Competent writing skills.	Some parts not referenced correctly. Writing skills could be improved.	Not referenced correctly. Poor writing skills. Needed proof reading.

Tutorial Assignments (60%)

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Pass	Failure
		A (85-100) A- (80-84)	B+ (75-79) B (70-74) B- (65-69)	C+ (60-64) C (55-59) C- (50-54)
Data and commands	No mistake in the following: (1) using the data, (2) using the SPSS commands, (3) saving the format of the result output	One mistake in the following: (1) using the data, (2) using the SPSS commands, (3) saving the format of the result output	Two mistake(s) in the following: (1) using the data, (2) using the SPSS commands, (3) saving the format of the result output	Incorrect in the following: (1) using the data, (2) using the SPSS commands, (3) saving the format of the result output
Tables and figures	All the findings are correctly and clearly presented.	All the key findings are clearly presented while having 1-2 minor mistakes.	Some of the key findings are clearly presented while 1-2 key findings need more clarity.	The key findings are incorrectly presented or missing.
Interpretation/argument	Presents a convincing and well developed argument.	Develops a sound argument.	Argument needs further development.	No clear argument.
Writing	Demonstrates excellent writing skills.	Competent writing skills.	Writing skills could be improved.	Poor writing skills.

Required/Essential Readings

Babbie, E. (2016) *The Practice of Social Research*, Thomson.

Norusis, M. J. *The SPSS Guide to Data Analysis*. (The 2006 edition or any subsequent edition will be fine).

Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*. London: SAGE.

Oliver, P. (2010). *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Treiman, D. J. (2014) *Quantitative Data Analysis: Doing Social Research to Test Ideas*, John Wiley & Sons.

Additional readings will also be given weekly on a topic by topic basis.

Important Notes:

(1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3* hours of class contact and 6* hours

of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.

- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.

* Numbers of hours are subject to adjustment for individual courses.

(20 July 2018)